

ON SPECIALTIES IN MEDICINE.

**ON SPECIALISTS IN MEDICINE.**

*Herodotus' Account of Specialties in Ancient Egypt.—Oliver Wendell Holmes on Specialties in Medicine.—Social and Professional Aspects of the Question.—Serious and Infamous Specialists.*

**TO THE EDITOR:—** Sir:—

As it is fashionable, among writers upon subjects of the customs and practices of different classes of society, to seek parallels in the classics, I shall, on the outset, quote a paragraph, bearing upon the subject of this letter, from one of the earliest chronicles of what are, to us, "the oldest times." We are informed by Herodotus, the "Father of History," that there were Specialists in Egypt more than twenty-three centuries ago, in the following language:

"The art of medicine is there divided among them: each physician and

“himself to one disease only, and not more. All places abound in physicians; “some physicians are for the eyes, others for the head, others for the teeth, “others for the parts about the belly, and others for internal diseases.”—Cary’s translation, *Euterpe*, page 125.

As Egypt, at that time, was the most advanced of all the nations then

But it does not require an extended investigation in the sociology of either dead or living nations, to convince a rational creature of this age of the world's history, of the advantage of such a division of the "Healing Art." Yet it is well known to all, that physicians, as a rule, discourage the cultivation of specialties, and that many never lose an opportunity to cast some slur upon specialists. Professor Oliver Wendell Holmes, the

"The tendency of the profession is to divide itself up into *specialties*, which "makes men *skillful*, but *narrow-minded*. I do not say that this is not better for "making, but it is fraught with incalculable danger to the *social dignity* and "standing of the profession."

Invalids, consider it for a moment. Your physicians are thus taught that "social dignity and standing" are of greater importance to them than skill to treat your diseases. I had supposed that the attainment of skill was the grand object of a physician's life; the point toward which all his aspirations should lead him, and all his efforts be directed. If the division of the profession into specialties "makes men skillful," as stated by Professor Hering, then every principle of reason and sentiment of humanity

When I had won my diploma, and those from whose hands I received it had declared that I was qualified to practice all branches of my profession, I felt that I possessed an unquestionable right to choose and practice, as a specialty, a particular branch or class of ailments, as I have done, and that in doing so I should *elevate*, rather than degrade, both myself and the

profession of medicine. I was not actuated alone by personal ambition. I had yet a higher hope in view, that of mitigating human sufferings; and what I felt to be my duty has been my reward.

Comparatively little that is useful in any department of science or art, is discovered by accident. Almost all valuable facts and great achievements have been *worked out* by long and labored processes of thought and practice, he who, who had vision, the subjects of their *social attention*. In Medi-

cine and Surgery, almost all great discoveries have been made, and brilliant achievements accomplished, by Specialists. They are the *Pioneers* of the science and art, and *General Practitioners* "those who come after them": mere *copyists*, who adopt the former's discoveries and use the fruits of the *Specialists'* genius and labor for their own profit.

The span of life is too short, and the field of our profession too exten-

I wish the reader to fully understand that I do not defend all those who call themselves Socialists. As we have numerous cases as we have come

feit physicians, and some of them are the basest imitations, the most infamous cheats that ever existed. I have nothing but feelings of contempt and words of condemnation for such. Whatever is most meritorious is most often the subject of fraudulent imitation. It is not strange, then, that we have pretended specialists: brazen charlatans, traveling from city to city, village to village, and even hamlet to hamlet, living at hotels and lodging houses,

remaining a few months here and a few weeks there, reviling local established physicians, promising to cure every person who presents himself, and then, when "played out," or driven out, flitting to "pastures new" to repeat their nefarious practices. It is not remarkable that such men strew their paths with physical wrecks of humanity.

Very truly and Respectfully,  
J. A. THOMPSON, M.D.

**Dr. Hunter's Visit to Memphis.**

**Dr. James A. Hunter**, formerly of Europe, late of New Orleans, Doctor of Medicine and Surgery, University of Brussels, Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Edinburgh; a Pupil of St. Thomas Hospital and

Dr. Hunter has, for twenty-five years, devoted special attention to diseases of the HEAD, THROAT, CHEST AND BLOOD, embracing Catarrh, Sore Throat, Bronchitis, Asthma, Consumption, Deafness, Eye, Heart and Brain Diseases. Office hours, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 1 to 6 p.m.

Persons at a distance should send for **Dr. Hunter's Journal, Books and Lists of Questions**. While a personal consultation is desirable, it is not always necessary, and treatment can, in all cases, be conducted by correspondence.

CHRIS L MAS GOOD  
DGDERS'S AND WOSTENHOLM'S FINE POCKET CUTLE  
Razors, Scissors,  
SPLENDID ASSORTMENT of SCISSORS IN CASE

Fine Carvers, Nut Crackers, Nut Picks,  
Triple Plated Knives, Forks and Spoons.  
Boys' Tool Chests, Roller and Ice Skates,  
BREECH-LOADING SHOTGUNS.

---

**MORGILL BROS. & CO**

W. M. ROOTES, R. DES JARDINS, W. W. MILLER, JOHN S. SPER  
**DES JARDINS, MILLER & ROOTES**  
**WHOLESALE**

**ARDWARE, CUTLERY, GUNS**  
**AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS,**  
 o. 394 Main Street, : : Memphis, Ten

**A FINE OPPORTUNITY**

IS NOW OFFERED TO  
**SAVE MONEY**  
Our stock is immense, consequently we must make a

**BREAK IN PRICES**  
Everything Marked Down Extremely Low. Look at our Large Assortment of  
**CLOTHING**

in all grades. Special Bargains in Every Department at the  
**LUFF CITY CLOTHING HOUSE**  
 259 MAIN STREET. S. VENDIG.

**1015.  
CANDIES!  
FIRE WORKS**  
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL, AT  
FISKE & HALLIDAY, 20 MADISON ST.

—THE—  
**Rivermore Foundry & Machine Co.**

160 to 174 Adams Street, Memphis, Tenn.,  
 WE ACCEPTED THE AGENCY FOR THE CELEBRATED  
**Atlas Engine,**  
 Manufactured at Indianapolis, Ind., and are now prepared to furnish same at prices which can  
 be equalled for same quality of work. Also manufacturers of

**STON PRESSES, HORSE POWERS, GIN GEARING**  
AND EVERY VARIETY OF  
Station Work, Including Overhauling and Repairing Engines and Machinery  
ORDERS SOLICITED.

---

Wm. Davis. John A. Sullivan. Chas. Clark. M. J. Cla

**M. GAYN & CO.**

**Wholesale Grocers, Cotton Factors  
And Commission Merchants,  
2 and 234 Front St., Memphis, Tenn**

**M. BALNEY** devotes his whole time to the Weighing and Sale of all Cotton entrusted charge. Cotton Warehouse, 18 Washington Street.

